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"I LOVE TO LIE ALONG THE BANKS OF BROOKS, AND WATCH THE BOUGHS ABOVE ME SWAY AND SWING."

PHOTO ROBERT ASHER.

THE HERMIT

BY ETHEL GRIFFITH BAILEY

A Faun—(A Fragment.)

*I will go out to grass with that old King,
For I am weary of cloths and cooks,
I long to lie along the banks of brooks,
And watch the boughs above me sway and swing.
Come, I will pluck off Custom's livery,
Nor longer be a lackey to old Time.
Time shall serve me, and at my feet shall fling
The spoil of listless minutes. I shall climb
The wild trees for my food, and run
Through dale and upland as the fox runs free.
Laugh for cool joy and sleep i' the warm sun
And men will call me mad, like that old King.*

—Richard Hovey.

Yesterday we made a pilgrimage to the hermit, who dwells on these mountains, and Nature in her bounty gave us a day for the purpose, one of her perfect days

—upon which it is impossible to suggest an improvement—during which one feels a sense of her prodigality and magnificent abundance. The brilliant purity



HIS TROPHIES GROW ABOUT HIM AS SPONTANEOUSLY AS HIS TAWNY BEARD.

and health beaming over earth and sky, which absorbs one's heart and life irresistibly to itself, suffers no release of idle personalities, but blends and merges all into an infinite, indivisible Whole. The low-lying valleys saturate with mist and sunshine—the sturdy stretch of tree-crested peaks, the plastic, undulatory mountains; the transcendent purity, the mystic unending spaces of the great sky—all, all, and the melting suffused heart of man merge into the infinite irresistible glory of the Day.

Savage neighbors have lately crossed these trails, stealthy, wild-eyed creatures whose claws and hoofs leave marks along our ways; at times the bay of a deer hound or the distant report of a gun sounds through the rocky ravine, but without impertinence; may not the wildness in the heart of man and the savage instinct to kill in the cougar he stalks, also meet and mingle, find their satisfaction on lower if not higher grounds; for all within the precincts of these holy hours is justified—unquestionably good. The jay's wild scream is coarser, less

melodious, but of ranker, sturdier fibre than that of the small canary he trees with. Both ring wildly true to some half-forgotten instinct one has known; one cannot say which finds more echoes in himself.

The troubled lowing of Admetus' herds flows liquidly upon the breath of the breeze-swept valleys. Phoebus lies sleeping somewhere near, I know! Under each tawny oak or giant cedar I look sharply—he may be there! Once, I saw the garland of leaves that bind the god-like brow but my human feet stumbled amid briars and before I arose he had gone! They linger close—these divine visitors—on such a day amid these peaks.

Endymion is not dead, as many think, and Diana, lately discovered, visits him on these Olympian heights as yesternight in Greece. She comes attended by silent, fragrant music, and the informing, mystical moonlight. I searched long through ferny glens, over mossed slumbering grey boulders and under the whispering trees—all things conspire to disclose that she is near—but not yet, though I have perchance gazed directly through her, am I permitted the sight. The white formless moonlight, plenteous, sinuous, soft fingered over leafy bosses is her light touch, her breath the sigh of love-sick, amorous breezes, herself, alas, she hides. What reverence, what rigorous austerities, shall one practice—how purge the eyes of mortal blindness that one may spiritually see?

The true hermit is never an accident of circumstances; nor can he, more easily



THE QUAIL NESTING WITHOUT FEAR.

PHOTO ROBERT ASHER.

than the poet, be made. He must be as native to his wooded park and the singing, stony brook that runs by his hut, as the quail, nesting without fear at his door. The Hermit met us regally with an unaffected nonchalance worthy a king; and indeed I was sure we had thus come suddenly upon Adametus. His herds filled the valley, and above the weird music of the pines, the reeds of Apollo sounded soft and wild o'er a distant hill.

The Hermit greeted us at his door. A coarse, hairy, homely man, shaggy as

stamped with originality and a certain leonine power; so that one wondered he had not been tempted and decoyed by the place he might easily have held in the affairs of men.

These things, at first glance, one saw; but when one met squarely and deliberately the Hermit's eye he paused. So have I done when riding rapidly over an unknown mesa I have come upon the edge of a cliff and reined in none too soon. There was that downright simplicity and awful frankness about him that was terri-



THE SPLASH OF FALLING WATER AND A QUAIL'S LOW CALLING NOTE CAME THROUGH THE OPEN DOOR.
ROBERT ASHER, PHOTO.

Pan, with a druid's long, grey beard, and an eye half-soldier's, half-prophet's. Gaunt, formidable, elemental; strong and slouchy with a character that impressed through his negligent clothing as a rugged landscape in a rough-hewn frame. There was even something reassuring and comfortable in the dent of his old weatherworn hat, and the bag of well-seasoned trousers at the knee; his whole uncouth garb spoke of service and reliability, and gave assurance that he owned his own clothes and was not, like so many, possessed by them. A man

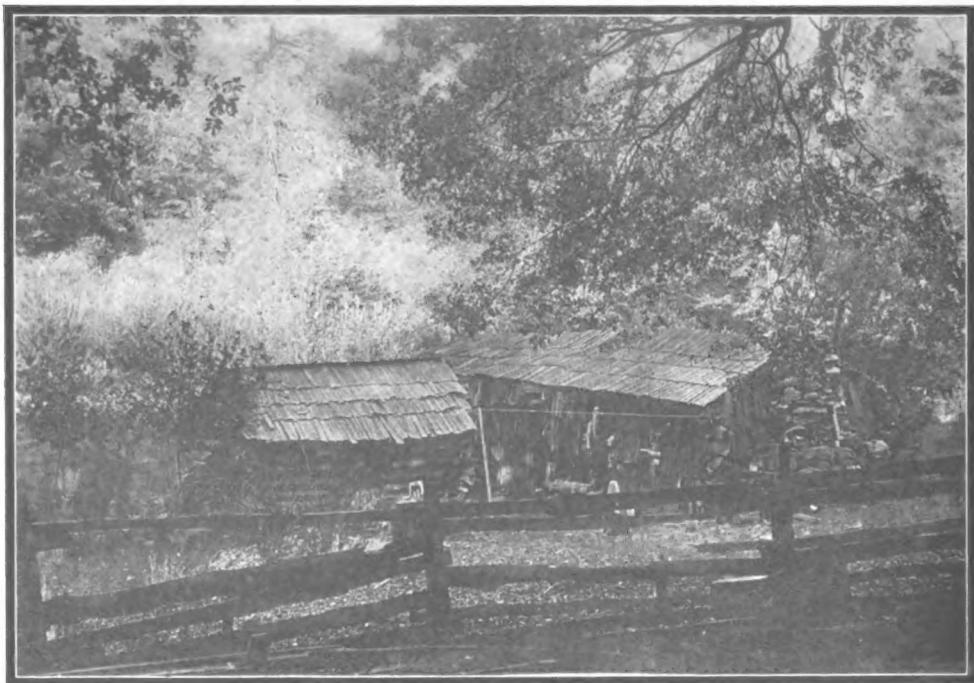
fying. One felt as when the biting wind of the sea strikes naked flesh, and drew instinctively some shabby garment of convention or subterfuge to hide behind. An air of cold candor and utter truth that froze our shifty efforts of concealment and we felt that here, for better or for worse, we were, at last, face to face with a Man. It was not a little dangerous and compelled one to draw up his rusty armor of sincerity to meet this cold blade of Truth. It should have fared hard with us had he truly exerted the merciless penetration of his simplicity and can-

dor; but as though recognizing us for the children that we were, he waved us without ado into his cabin, and went forward with his work.

The place was the nest, the garment, of its master. No more artificial than the nest of a wren-tit or a husk of corn. Low of ceiling, commodious—yet with no extravagant inches—it fitted him well. The few windows, small, bright and penetrating against the log background, as his own sharp deep-set eyes; and the great stone fireplace, crude and broad, the heart

with cones and needles and with whose aromatic presence ones thought of slovenliness could sooner attach.

The rude cabin, made of shakes and supported by rough logs was grey and unobtrusive as a rock or fallen tree and merged itself with something like melody into its surroundings. Below, the river talked meditatively all day long, whispering at sandy edges, shouting gay little intoned measures over tiny falls, and smiling and twitching under the tickling sun-flecks that fell through the leaves.



THE HERMIT MET US AT HIS DOOR. ROBERT ASHER, PHOTO.

of his home, full, like its master's of comfort and warmth and good cheer. Everywhere books and papers littered the shelves and tables, a certain careless tolerance of disorder prevailed, yet there was everywhere observed such perfect cleanliness as made the little room fragrant and airy and sweet. The wind from his pines filled the air with balsam; a certain breezy air of sanity and well-being surrounded him; an atmosphere as tonic and vital as that of these trees which think no shame to negligently litter the earth

The splash of falling water and a quail's low calling note came through the open door.

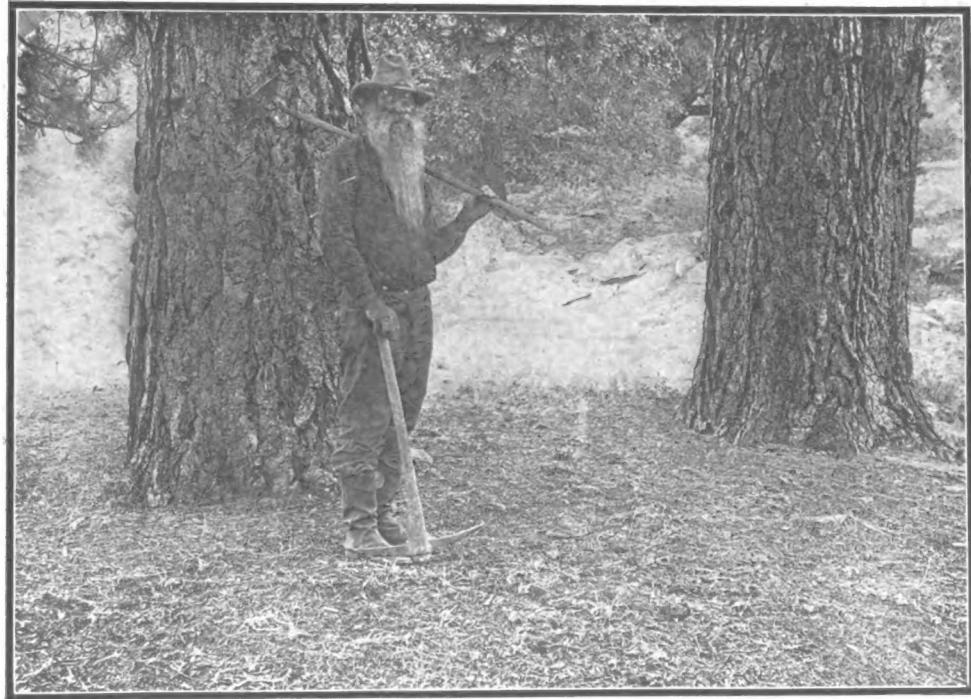
Some one inquired if he kept chickens, and replying that he was watching a setting of eggs at the time, he took us to the corner of his doorstep where, in a tangle of brake and ceonothus, a little grey quail-mother sat fearlessly over her dozen speckled eggs. A lion's skin dried by the door and a deer's horns served as convenient hat-peg. His cabin was no college boy's den, and his trophies grew

about him as spontaneously as his tawny beard.

He continued to engage himself in such poetic employment as befits a sage and a hermit; for he was moulding and perfecting a great ball of wheaten bread, which together with wild fruits, some milk from his herd, and rice—such as Confucius loved—were the ample support of a philosopher.

How beautiful becomes the commonplace when lighted by a fresh glance of penetration. I have made bread many

Homeric acts. They drew him wholesomely close to the knub and the juice of life where the meat grows sweetest. One may esteem it a vital, and, if you will, a spiritual expression, the creations of cookery. What skillful alchemy of all the ripe earth yields! Its combinations may become bits of creative and formative genius. And how Ceres loves and protects the gardener who liberates her powers with his hoe! A pleasing devotion too, dignified by the legends of what ancient fire-worshippers, one's labor at the



HE SAID HE LOVED THE PLEBEIAN LABORS, LOVED TO COOK, AND TO CHOP HIS WOOD AND TO HOE.

ROBERT ASHER, PHOTO.

times but only yesterday did the act appear to me in its truly poetic light. It was a devotional service one had no small pride in offering the shrines of one's household divinities. There is no meanness in the commonplace, but only in the eyes that see it.

For himself he said he loved the plebeian labors; loved to cook and to chop his wood and to hoe. And I saw that to him they assumed at will a necessary and primitive grace not unworthy the

balsamic, disorderly wood-pile, while as the chips fly and one's blood and courage sing, some elusive spiritual blessing surely falls.

Is there not a tendency among moderns, and especially among Americans, to make of domestic life a bit of rapid and well-oiled machinery, that shall turn off the days wholesale? Many such arrangements, with servants and establishments and the *impedimenta* these imply, seem somehow like a sorry scuffle and escape.

Have we not reached that stage where we employ strangers to enjoy our lives, and to save trouble, servants, who shall do, as it were, the living for us while we wait?

The Hermit's great cat festooned herself about the table-legs, or murmured remarks in that soft, husky, throaty language with which she speaks to her kittens; the quail-mother ran undisturbed over the doorstep, and the Hermit himself embodied careless content; thrusting bare brown arms into the fragrant warmth of the yeast-scented dough; kneading and moulding this ripened fruit of the sheared

bread, and it perhaps of me. Somebody—a scientist—says the yeast cell is the unit of life. I think it may be so."

I have never before met a man so strongly wild and natural. As intrinsic as though sprung with the brake from the soil. The tall, scraggy lilies, tawny, sun-tanned things that grew around his cabin, were not more natively planted. What wild dreams stir and feed this secluded mountain heart? Some life of rich exclusiveness he leads which few have ever known. Perchance some subterranean streams of the spirit keep him ever young; certainly no outward event



THE PLACE WAS THE NEST, THE GARMENT, OF ITS MASTER.

PHOTO ROBERT ASHER.

fields into the last homely gift of old Ceres; the brown whole wheat innocent of batting, with native primitive sweetness all preserved; a large chunk of vigor, fresh-plucked off the bounty of the earth. Should not one so feel native and elemental, engaged in a generous, domestic employment, worthy the noblest?

"I learn," he told us, "much of my

leaves trace nor lends this joy and calm serenity to his face.

One felt that here was that man long sought, whom the West only has produced, and who, now that the pioneers are thinning is to be found but rarely—I mean that "Nonchalant Person," natural, lusty, large, leisurely—the Native Californian.